

VZCZCXYZ0000  
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHAH #0171 0341022  
ZNR UUUUU ZZH  
R 031022Z FEB 06  
FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6954

UNCLAS ASHGABAT 000171

SIPDIS

STATE FOR ECA AND EUR/CACAEN, INFO EUR/PPD, DAS/SA  
GASTRIGHT and SA/PPD SCHWARTZ

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [SCUL](#) [PGOV](#) [SOCI](#) [PHUM](#) [EAGR](#) [ELAB](#) [KPAO](#) [TX](#)  
SUBJECT: NIYAZOV FORMALIZES DOWNGRADING OF THEORETICAL  
STUDIES AND SELECTS WEAK MINISTER OF EDUCATION

REF A: ASHGABAT 00138; REF B: 2005 ASHGABAT 01318

SUMMARY

1. (SBU) Upon his return from a rare trip to Moscow, Turkmen President Saparmurat Niyazov convened meetings in which he reshuffled the heads of major Turkmen educational institutions, appointed a new Minister of Education with little relevant experience, and issued pronouncements that threaten to further erode the Turkmen educational system. Niyazov seems bent on dismantling the last vestiges of theoretical instruction in Turkmen schools and replacing it with student-led "practical" training. End Summary.

DAWN MEETING AT AGRICULTURAL INSTITUTE BODES ILL FOR R&D

2. (SBU) Convening a pre-sunrise meeting at Ashgabat's Turkmen Agricultural University (TAU) on January 25, President Niyazov reviewed TAU's curriculum and announced a series of changes. Niyazov questioned the need for six distinct faculties within TAU, including agricultural economics, grain studies, cotton studies and soil studies. He ordered that these faculties be abolished and re-instituted as departments within the university. He also created new departments, including agricultural banking and food products.

3. (SBU) Niyazov declared that the Soviet system overemphasized theoretical studies to the detriment of practical expertise. He announced that a TAU education should be five years instead of four, but only two years would take place at TAU, with the remaining three spent farming collective fields under the supervision of the local etrap governors. The students are to be organized into "councils of young farmers" to share practical expertise on farming among themselves, as opposed to receiving guidance from professors or specialists. Only after this five year period will TAU students be eligible to receive their diploma.

SHUFFLING PLACES WEAKER CANDIDATES at TOP

4. (SBU) Niyazov then appointed new rectors for both Turkmen State Pedagogical Institute (TSPI) and the Turkmen Agricultural University (TAU). Niyazov appointed Rejepmurat Charyevich Galayev, previous Turkmen State University (TSU) rector, to the post of rector of the Turkmen State Pedagogical Institute named after Seyitnazar Seydi (TSPI); the rector of TSPI was fired. [Comment: As mentioned in Reftel A, Galayev's new position is a de facto demotion, and follows Niyazov's accusations that Galayev had taken bribes from Turkmen

seeking admission to TSU. End Comment.] Niyazov has not yet named a new rector for TSU. Esenmurat Orazgeldiyev, previous rector of TAU, was named Agriculture Minister, and Gurtmurat Posykov replaced him as TAU rector.

15. (SBU) Niyazov appointed a new Minister of Education, Shemshat Annagulyeva, filling a position which had been vacant over two months following the appointment of previous Minister Hydyr Sarlyev as Ambassador to Armenia on October 31, 2005 [Reftel B]. Annagulyeva had served as deputy mayor of Ashgabat since August 2005, but is otherwise ill-prepared for her new position, having served as a kindergarten/primary school teacher and briefly as administrator at a small high school in Ashgabat. Niyazov noted that Saparlyev "was a bit of a weak person" but has named a successor with arguably less experience. [Comment: In a meeting with Embassy representatives in 2005, Annagulyeva appeared especially timid; Ministry of Education Senior Specialist Nury Saparovich dominated the meeting. End Comment.]

#### COMMENT

-----

16. (SBU) Niyazov's decisions are not surprising, given his determination to keep the Turkmen population ignorant. While his selection of a weak Minister of Education with strengthen the hand of Saparovich, post hopes it will not further jeopardize USG exchange programs and the June 2006 Central Asian Teachers of English Conference (CATEC).